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## Book Reviews

**The Use of the Scriptures in Theology.** By WILLIAM NEWTON CLARKE, D.D., Professor of Christian Theology in Colgate University. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905. Pp. viii + 170. \$1, net.

The reading public has for some time been familiar with the results of the historical study of the Bible. Such study has made it evident that the Bible contains the record of a progressing religious development culminating in Christ. It follows that there are many elements in the Bible which cannot be unqualifiedly approved by one who has adopted the Christian standard. But the current conception of the fundamental task of Christian Theology has not been changed to harmonize with this conclusion; that is, it has been generally taken for granted that the business of the systematic theologian is to reproduce in systematic form exactly what the Bible teaches, no more and no less.

Dr. Clarke in his lectures bearing the title given above has squarely faced the problem forced upon us by modern biblical study. He frankly recognizes that this traditional conception of the practical identity of biblical theology and systematic theology is impossible. Moreover, to make a pretense of holding to this theory in the face of modern scholarship is baneful in many ways. In the first place, the traditional theory assumes that the Bible teaches one harmonious system of truth. But, as a matter of fact, we have varied types of thought in the Bible. Can the 109th Psalm and the Sermon on the Mount be fitted together? Again, "If a man is in duty bound to agree with a book, the surest and shortest way is to make the book agree with the man" (p. 30). Hence we have far-fetched and arbitrary exegesis, palpable misinterpretation of Scripture due to the supposed necessity of harmonizing Scripture with itself and with the conceptions of the theologian. In view of these facts, Dr. Clarke remarks: "I tell no secret—though perhaps many a man has wished he could keep it a secret—when I say that to the average minister today the Bible that lies on his pulpit is more or less an unsolved problem" (p. 161).

Dr. Clarke's solution of the difficulty is in brief as follows: Let us admit the fact that a theology which shall reproduce *in toto* the teachings of the Scripture is, in the nature of the case, impossible. The theologian's task is not to tabulate truths ready to hand, but to discover a touchstone by

which to distinguish Christian truth from non-Christian conceptions. Such a test cannot be quantitative; it must be qualitative. No external utterance, not even the reported sayings of Jesus himself, can be exempt from this qualitative test.

What is Christian is such by reason of its relation to that which Christ signifies or stands for. But the relation lies deeper than considerations of time, or immediate origin. It lies in the material itself, and is a relation of likeness or moral unity. Let this be our standard: That is Christian which enters into or accords with the view of divine realities which Jesus Christ revealed. (P. 56.)

The question still remains as to how we shall make this qualitative test. To this query the author replies:

The way to know a Christian thought is the same as the way to perceive the blue in the sky—look at it and discern the quality. We may misjudge, but that is the fault of our poor senses, not of the method of the spiritual sense-perception. There is no way but to judge and to recognize.

This seems to land us at once in that subjectivism which is so often identified with anarchy; and Dr. Clarke attempts, but not with marked success, to refute this objection. He declares, and rightly, that we do have the objective fact of the spiritual life of Jesus Christ; but, as it seems to me, he might well have stated with even more emphasis that the supreme element in the life and teaching of Jesus is a clear recognition of the relative values of various aspects of life. Now, values can never be objectively described. They must be felt subjectively or they are not understood at all. The real content of Christianity is thus inevitably found in the living convictions of men who inwardly appreciate Jesus.

After all, it is only a superficial psychology which makes men afraid of a process of free judgment which is constantly tested by the free judgments of other men. As Dr. Clarke points out, one can find no more arbitrary subjectivism than in the traditional dogmatic method of appealing to Scripture. Calvinist and Armenian, Baptist and Pedobaptist, Roman Catholic and Quaker, all have appealed by the same method to the same objective Bible. Admitting the worst that can be said for Dr. Clarke's method of subjective valuation, we are certainly not likely to reach a position of any greater anarchy than that exhibited by the traditional method in theology. But has modern science in general become anarchistic because it appeals to free personal judgment? Has truth become less certain in the realm of science by inviting the freest possible criticism? Why should we fear anarchy in theology any more than in geology or in astronomy, if we appeal simply to the honest judgment of men?

Biblical theology, then, is not identical with Christian theology. There are pre-Christian and non-Christian elements in the Bible. And the only way in which to distinguish between these Christian elements and the non-Christian elements is to come into vital sympathy with Christ so that one's powers of judgment are quickened and trained by contact with him. In short, Christian theology is not a mere reproduction of the contents of a book, nor even a reproduction of the objective teachings of Christ, but is the exposition of those convictions which a man will hold if he has been spiritually transformed by Christ.

Dr. Clarke points out that the historical method of studying the Bible is a great aid to us in this task of Christian discernment. It helps us to separate the various types of religious thought. He also sees a truth which is often overlooked by scholars, namely, that historical method alone cannot give us a systematic theology. For historical science all facts are equally facts, the rogh Psalm as well as the dying prayer of Stephen. History gives no means of distinguishing between these elements. The valuation which must be the basis of such distinction comes, not from a comparison of historical documents, but from a vital appreciation of the significance of Christ, and such appreciation is inevitably a subjective process. In recognizing this fact Dr. Clarke rightly says that Christian theology is freed from all slavish dependence upon the results of higher criticism. The capacity to value the contents of Scripture in the spirit of Christ depends far more upon one's vital contact with Christ himself than upon one's technical acquaintance with the critical problems of biblical scholarship.

In conclusion mention should be made of the sweet spirit, religious insight, and frank and honest courage which appear conspicuously upon every page of the book. The strength of evangelical religion lies in just this combination of quiet, profound, moral courage with the utmost charity and love, which Dr. Clarke so conspicuously exhibits in all his books. The volume will be of great use to the theological students of this country in helping them to approach one of the difficult problems before us today.

G. B. S.

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**Jesus and the Prophets.** BY CHARLES S. MACFARLAND, PH.D.  
New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1905. Pp. 249. \$1.50.

The aim of this book of two hundred fifty odd pages is to set forth the attitude of the evangelists, and in particular of Jesus, toward that body of prophetic writings which have always from apostolic times been regarded as so closely and subtly connected with our Lord's person and work. How did our Lord regard and use the prophets? What was the